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Property From a Christian Standpoint

By RICHMOND DEAN

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CHRISTIANITY in industry, and in all dealings man to man, would cure many of our troubles, and prove a solution of much of the unrest now present in our body politic. This condition will only be brought about when the great majority of the people recognize the fact that all the teachings of Christ are clearly adapted to all conditions of life. These teachings are all simple, and the maxims set forth are in language that can be understood by all; they are intensely human, and consequently entirely practical.

We are all inclined to look upon things religious as pertaining to churches only, but fail to realize that they should be a part of our daily life, and, if introduced in our dealings with each other, would tend to smooth the way and make life more pleasant for all mankind. Peter in his teachings says:

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King. Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also the forward.

It seems so easy to follow the straight and narrow path, and yet many of us do not do so; for, while the great majority of mankind is honest and unselfish, there are three forces which actuate a number of people, and which contribute largely to the unrest and unsettled conditions now existing; these forces are: greed, selfishness and dishonesty. These forces are not confined to any one class, but exist in all society. This results in the "human equation" which must be taken into consideration in all dealings between humankind, and it is in the endeavor to control these forces

that Congress and legislatures enact so much legislation, a great deal of which is useless. Mankind can perhaps be controlled by such laws, but no legislation ever enacted can make an honest man out of a dishonest one. We must, then, in the solution of our problems, recognize and, as far as possible, deal with this "human equation."

ELEMENTS NECESSARY TO PRODUCTION

Three elements alone result in production; these are management, labor and capital. The absence of any one of these elements nullifies the endeavor of the others, and renders their efforts fruitless. It follows that each of these elements is entitled to a fair and reasonable daily wage, and, if after the payment of this daily wage to each, there should remain a surplus, such surplus should be divided in a fair and equitable manner between the elements that produced it.

It is, however, a well known fact that neither management nor labor will contribute to any deficit which may occur from the operation of a business, and it is then only fair that before any surplus resulting from the year's operation is divided, there should, in all fairness, be deducted and set aside a certain percentage of such surplus to insure the daily wage of capital in years when a deficit occurs; for it is not reasonable to expect one element to bear the total burden of a deficit.

The year 1921 is a forcible illustration of this condition, for if many of the large companies had not provided for "the rainy day," and accumulated a large surplus, they would have been

forced to suspend operations, in which event there would have been no employment for either management or labor.

It is admitted labor can often suggest methods that will result in economy and efficiency; it is therefore logical that it have some voice in the conduct of that part of the business which relates to its endeavor, and to this end a committee of the three elements should meet frequently to discuss and decide the questions which arise in regard to the various phases of production. This same committee, or a similar one, should pass upon all questions in regard to employment and discharge; and the committee should also be vested with authority to provide for the relief of worthy employees who might be absent on account of sickness, accident or causes beyond their control. If, however, an employee is absent on account of laziness or debauchery, it is to the interest of all that his services be dispensed with; such relief should be a charge against the business.

Pensions should be coupled with an insurance feature, and the attendant expense should be participated in by all. Often a wife, or the immediate family, is left destitute on the death of a pensioner under present methods. It is common knowledge that what costs nothing is not valued; furthermore, the participation in this expense is very likely to instill a spirit of thrift, which is much needed in our economic life today.

Unions in themselves are undoubtedly good for all interests concerned, but they should be internal. It is a well known fact that unions, as we know them at present, have been in many cases shamefully subordinated to the personal interests of those charged with the administration of affairs, and have resulted in graft, bombing and even murder. A recent article

by Prof. J. Laurence Laughlin, of the University of Chicago, entitled "The Perils of Labor," sets forth the danger of this situation very clearly.

Opportunity should always be afforded to all, to obtain an interest in the business in which they are engaged, and we have many instances of those in a lowly, subordinate position climbing the ladder of success by industry, thrift and application.

When our business is conducted as "our" business, in honor and fairness by all concerned, it is sure to succeed.

PROVISION FOR HARD TIMES

Centuries of experience have demonstrated that at intervals there occurs what we call hard times; during such periods the natural law of supply and demand comes into play, and the result is depression in business and unemployment. Such periods can in the writer's opinion be provided for in the following manner:

The federal, state and municipal governments are always making appropriations for buildings, roads, waterways and various other improvements, most of which are not urgent, and can be held in abeyance without detriment to the public. Under such conditions the appropriations should be put in the hands of trustees, chosen from the people of the community concerned; then in times of depression these funds can be used to furnish work for the unemployed until business revives, to the extent that there is work for all. This plan, I am sure, will not appeal to those politicians who are in politics for what is in it for them individually.

There is a proportion of people, who, through causes beyond their control, are not able to earn their daily bread; a part of these can be trained, or rather educated, to certain trades or professions; and the education, care and maintenance of the incompetents, hand-

icapped persons, and dependents of all kinds should be provided for by the community in which they reside. It should not be considered that the care and maintenance of such people is the duty of persons inclined to philanthropy; it is in reality a solemn obligation of the entire community.

The Ten Commandments undoubtedly furnish the basis of all laws, and that being the case, the people generally should know and heed the injunctions which these commandments so clearly and simply set forth. If this is followed by the majority of people it would render unnecessary the maze of man-made laws, which affords an op-

portunity to advantage the vicious who take occasion to hang their cases on sophistries and technicalities, and by such means defeat the very law enacted to control them. In fact, a change in present conditions must be brought about by a change within and not from without. Laws must be enacted to control and punish the vicious, but such laws should not work a hardship on the honest and just, as they sometimes do.

Above all, we must endeavor to replace envy, hatred and malice with tolerance and forbearance in our dealings with each other. None of us can hope to be perfect; such a condition is not within human attainment.